

MARRIAGE FORMATION

DIOCESE
OF
SASKATOON

FIRST EDITION
2022

PARISH GUIDELINES

for preparing engaged
couples for marriage

BUILDING FAITH FILLED FAMILIES

practical tools for meaningful discussions
and an invitation to become life-long
disciples together, united in Christ

MARRIAGE
FORMATION
CURRICULUM

2022

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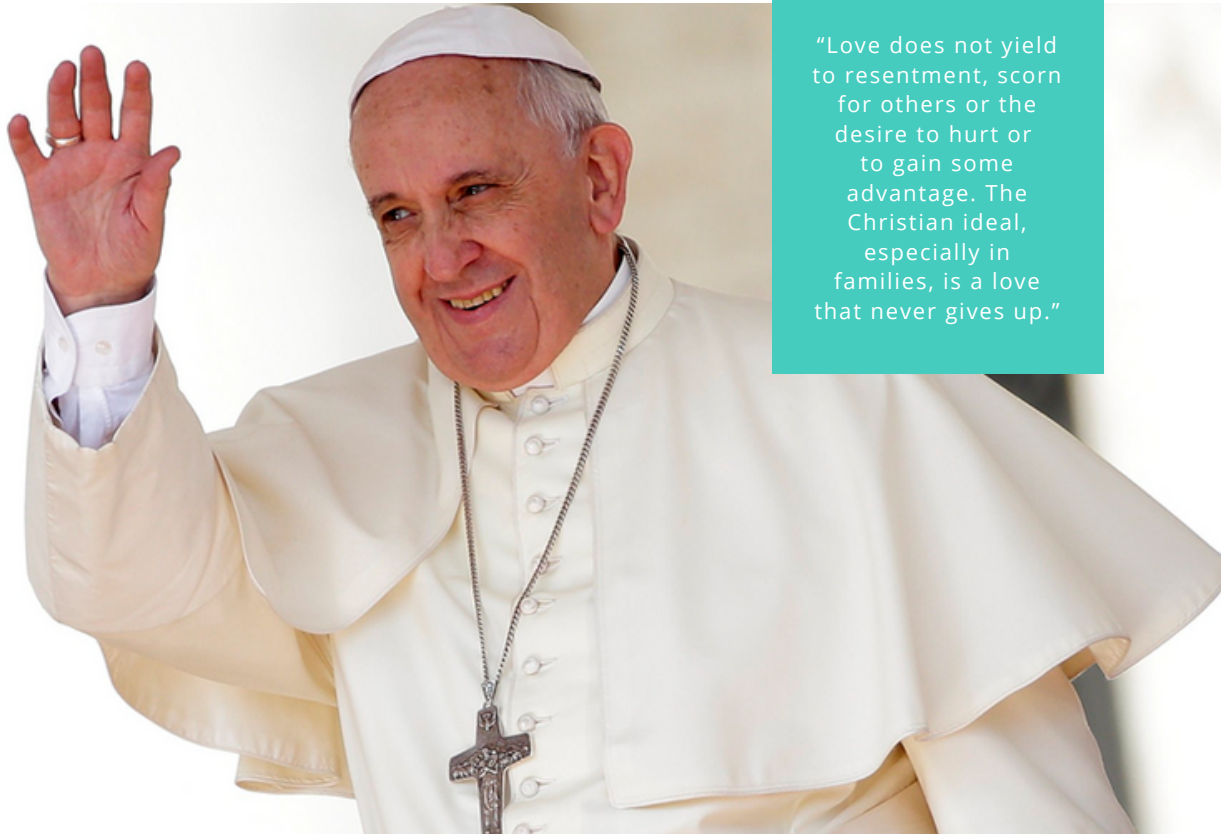
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POPE FRANCIS ON MARRIAGE

In his apostolic exhortation *Amoris Laetitia*, Pope Francis uses the First Letter to the Corinthians, to offer advice on how to keep your marriage strong throughout the years, based on true love.



“Love does not yield to resentment, scorn for others or the desire to hurt or to gain some advantage. The Christian ideal, especially in families, is a love that never gives up.”

1. LOVE IS PATIENT. For Pope Francis, “being patient does not mean letting ourselves be constantly mistreated, tolerating physical aggression or allowing other people to use us.” [...] “Love always has an aspect of deep compassion that leads to accepting the other person as part of this world, even when he or she acts differently than I would like.” “We encounter problems whenever we think that relationships or people ought to be perfect, or when we put ourselves at the center and expect things to turn out our way. Then everything makes us impatient, everything makes us react aggressively,” he warns.

2. LOVE IS AT THE SERVICE OF OTHERS. The Pope underscored that, through his letter, St. Paul “wants to stress that love is more than a mere feeling. Rather, it should be understood along the lines of the Hebrew verb “to love”; it is “to do good.” “As Saint Ignatius of Loyola said, ‘Love is shown more by deeds than by words.’ It thus shows its fruitfulness and allows us to experience the happiness of giving, the nobility and grandeur of spending ourselves unstintingly, without asking to be repaid, purely for the pleasure of giving and serving.”

3. LOVE IS NOT JEALOUS. “Love has no room for discomfiture at another person’s good fortune (cf. Acts 7:9; 17:5),” the Pope emphasized, adding that “Envy is a form of sadness provoked by another’s prosperity; it shows that we are not concerned for the happiness of others but only with our own well-being.”

“True love values the other person’s achievements. It does not see him or her as a threat. It frees us from the sour taste of envy. It recognizes that everyone has different gifts and a unique path in life.”

4

LOVE IS NOT BOASTFUL

Francis emphasizes that “Those who love not only refrain from speaking too much about themselves, but are focused on others; they do not need to be the center of attention.”

“Some think that they are important because they are more knowledgeable than others; they want to lord it over them.

Yet what really makes us important is a love that understands, shows concern, and embraces the weak.”

5

LOVE IS NOT RUDE

“To love is also to be gentle and thoughtful,” the Pope said, “and this indicates that “love is not rude or impolite; it is not harsh. Its actions, words and gestures are pleasing and not abrasive. Love abhors making others suffer.”

6

LOVE IS GENEROUS

Contrary to the popular saying, that “to love another we must first love ourselves,” the Pope recalls that St. Paul’s hymn to love “states that love ‘does not seek its own interest,’ nor ‘seek what is its own.’” “Generously serving others is far more noble than loving ourselves.”

7

LOVE IS NOT IRRITABLE OR RESENTFUL

In *Amoris Laetitia*, the Pope warns us about “a hidden irritation that sets us on edge where others are concerned, as if they were troublesome or threatening and thus to be avoided.”

“The Gospel tells us to look to the log in our own eye (cf. Mt. 7:5),” he adds. “If we must fight evil, so be it; but we must always say ‘no’ to violence in the home.”

8

LOVE FORGIVES

Pope Francis recommends not leaving any space for “ill will to take root in our hearts,” but to work for “forgiveness, which is rooted in a positive attitude that seeks to understand other people’s weaknesses and to excuse them.”

“Family communion,” the Pope states, “can only be preserved and perfected through a great spirit of sacrifice. It requires, in fact, a ready and generous openness of each and all to understanding, to forbearance, to pardon, to reconciliation.”

9

LOVE REJOICES WITH OTHERS

“When a loving person can do good for others, or sees that others are happy, they themselves live happily and in this way give glory to God, for ‘God loves a cheerful giver’ (2 Cor. 9:7),”

“The family must always be a place where, when something good happens to one of its members, they know that others will be there to celebrate it with them.” (Pope Francis)

10

LOVE BEARS ALL THINGS

This, the Pope explains, “implies limiting judgment, checking the impulse to issue a firm and ruthless condemnation: ‘Judge not and you will not be judged’ (Lk 6:37).”

“Married couples joined by love speak well of each other; they try to show their spouse’s good side, not their weakness and faults. In any event, they keep silent rather than speak ill of them. This is not merely a way of acting in front of others; it springs from an interior attitude.”



11

LOVE BELIEVES ALL THINGS

“This goes beyond simply presuming that the other is not lying or cheating,” the Pope explains.

“It means we do not have to control the other person, to follow their every step lest they escape our grip. Love trusts, it sets free, it does not try to control, possess and dominate everything.”

12

LOVE HOPES ALL THINGS

This word, the Pope says, “speaks of the hope of one who knows that others can change.”

“This does not mean that everything will change in this life. It does involve realizing that, though things may not always turn out as we wish, God may well make crooked lines straight and draw some good from the evil we endure in this world.”

13

LOVE ENDURES ALL THINGS

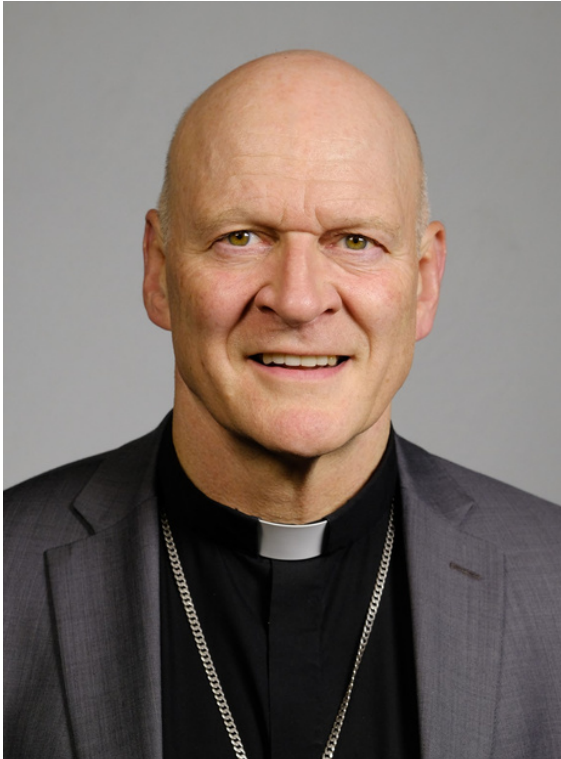
The Pope points out that this endurance “involves not only the ability to tolerate certain aggravations, but something greater: a constant readiness to confront any challenge.”

“Love does not yield to resentment, scorn for others or the desire to hurt or to gain some advantage. The Christian ideal, especially in families, is a love that never gives up.”



BISHOP'S MESSAGE

MOST REVEREND MARK A. HAGEMOEN,
BISHOP OF SASKATOON



Dear Clergy, PLDs, Parishes, and Staff,

I would like to introduce to you all the first edition of the curriculum for Marriage Formation in the Diocese of Saskatoon. I have been hearing from many clergy and laity throughout the diocese – in both our rural and urban parishes – about the need for strong support for couples discerning life-long, Catholic marriage.

The Diocese of Saskatoon seeks to provide solid theological formation and practical tools to address and raise topics for meaningful teaching and discussion, as we invite engaged couples through their parish faith communities to discern this wonderful, God-given vocation.

We also seek to offer strong pastoral hospitality and accompaniment through our pastors and Catholic married couples to engaged couples discerning Catholic sacramental marriage, and to support them in the journey to becoming life-long disciples united in Christ.

It is our hope that the support we provide to Pastors, parishes and marriage formation teams will assist our parishes and pastoral regions in equipping engaged couples to enter into marriage with faithfulness, joy, and hope. As we accompany young couples in their journey towards holy matrimony, let us aim to surround them by our larger circle of family, friends and faith community.



A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "+ Mark A. Hagemoen".

Most Reverend Mark A. Hagemoen
Bishop of Saskatoon

VISION

Marriage Formation in the Diocese of Saskatoon seeks to provide practical tools to raise topics for meaningful discussion and invite engaged couples into the life of a faith community. Through radical hospitality and the witness of Catholic married couples, engaged couples will be supported in the journey to becoming life-long disciples together, united in Christ.



THEMES

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

COMMUNICATION & CONFLICT RESOLUTION

STEWARDSHIP & FINANCE

SEXUALITY & FAMILY PLANNING

SPIRITUALITY & PRAYER

SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

LEARNING OUTCOMES

DURING THE SESSIONS, PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

FAMILY OF ORIGIN

- explore the family that they grew up in to identify communication styles, conflict resolution
- reflect on how childhood experiences may impact marriage
- identify any negative influences that may require additional attention (including addictions, abuse, pornography)
- discuss what values, habits, attitudes and idiosyncrasies that each partner brings to the marriage from the family of origin and reflect on how they will interact
- compare expectations of marriage and explore goals



- define communication and discuss the various elements of communication
- develop strategies to good communication
- recognize different styles of communication related to gender and personality
- consider how conflict can be an opportunity for growth in maturity
- understand forgiveness, offered and received as a grace from God to help us experience his mercy

COMMUNICATION

LEARNING OUTCOMES

DURING THE SESSIONS, PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

STEWARDSHIP & FINANCE

- discuss values and attitudes towards money and possessions
- discuss money through the lens of the Catholic faith
- learn about practical tools and areas to consider such as budgeting, saving, major long-term purchases, credit, debt, insurance and wills
- understanding stewardship as a way of life



- understand the Church teaching about human sexuality
- understand marriage as an image of Trinitarian love
- understand the basics of Natural Family Planning
- develop an understanding of the marriage vows as free, total, faithful and fruitful
- consider the procreative and unitive elements of the sexual union
- have open and honest dialogue about real life challenges like pregnancy, nursing, illness, infertility, miscarriage, stillbirth

SEXUALITY & FAMILY PLANNING

LEARNING OUTCOMES

DURING THE SESSIONS, PARTICIPANTS WILL HAVE THE OPPORTUNITY TO:

SPIRITUALITY & PRAYER

- discuss the personal faith journey of each partner
- hear the proclamation of the Kerygma
- learn to pray together as a couple
- experience prayer as a community
- discuss living in a marriage as a Catholic couple
- discuss raising children in a Catholic home

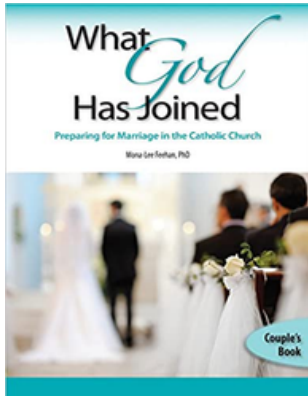


- understand what a sacrament means in the context of marriage
- gain a deeper understanding of the blessed Trinity
- consider the manner in which the Sacrament of Matrimony signifies the union of Christ and the Church (CCC 1661)

SACRAMENT OF MARRIAGE

RECOMMENDED RESOURCES

The following resources are recommended for Marriage Formation in the Diocese of Saskatoon. Please contact the Office of Evangelization & Catechesis for more information: 306-659-5836



WHAT GOD HAS JOINED helps couples discuss the important aspects of their relationship before they begin a lifelong journey together. Speaking from over twenty-five years of experience as a marriage preparation facilitator, author Mona-Lee Feehan has created an easy-to-understand resource that guides the engaged couple through a process of discovery. Couples have the opportunity to talk through vital topics before the wedding day. Each chapter includes worksheets for both bride and groom as well as thought-provoking questions to consider.

Available through Universal Church Supplies

437 Second Ave. N. Saskatoon SK S7K 2C1 306-384-1924 www.ucsask.com

BETTER TOGETHER - Helping couples create great marriages, equipping them with the tools they need to build a lasting, happy, and faith-filled marriage. Order from dynamiccatholic.com.

Also available through Universal Church Supplies
437 Second Ave. N. Saskatoon SK S7K 2C1
306-384-1924 www.ucsask.com



AND TWO SHALL BECOME ONE is a practical guide to Marriage Formation developed by the Roman Catholic Diocese of Hamilton. We have received permission to offer this material to parishes in the Diocese of Saskatoon.

Call the Office of Evangelization and Catechesis for a digital copy that you can print yourself. Full colour printed copies are available for \$30.

"On the threshold of his public life Jesus performs his first sign - at his mother's request - during a wedding feast. The Church attaches great importance to Jesus' presence at the wedding at Cana. She sees in it the confirmation of goodness of marriage and the proclamation that thenceforth marriage will be an efficacious sign of Christ's presence." (Catechism, 1613)

SETTING THE STAGE



"For missionary activity renews the Church, revitalizes faith and Christian identity, and offers fresh enthusiasm and new incentive. Faith is strengthened when it is given to others! It is in commitment to the Church's universal mission that the new evangelization of Christian peoples will find inspiration and support"

John Paul II, Redemptoris Missio

WAYS TO WELCOME prior to Marriage Formation Sessions



The first contact between the parish and the engaged couple is a critical step in starting a relationship

- an opportunity to set the stage for the engaged couple's experience in the parish
- if the call is not taken in person, or if the inquiry is received via email, a response must happen within 24 hours



A follow-up email thanking the engaged couple for the inquiry is a nice gesture of hospitality

- a "Congratulations on your Engagement" e-mail greeting or a card sent in the mail
- can include a parish bulletin or an invitation to an upcoming social event

DETAILS MATTER! at the Marriage Formation Sessions

GREETERS

- one or two married couples from the parish at the door, greeting engaged couples as they arrive
- greeters direct the guests to the seating and to the area where refreshments are set up

REFRESHMENTS & MEALS

- appealing presentation and excellent quality of food enhances the experience for the engaged couple

CREATING AMBIANCE

- simple table decor and candles are an easy way to create a romantic atmosphere
- easy listening music in the background helps to create comfort and a relaxing mood
- ensure all materials and supplies are available on the tables

RECOMMENDED FORMAT

Marriage Formation sessions may be carried out in one of the following formats, provided adequate time is allowed to present all six themes and meet learning outcomes



ONCE A WEEK FOR SIX TO EIGHT WEEKS

- two hour sessions once a week for 6-8 weeks (12-16 hours)

Typical session would consist of:

- introduction, ice-breaker, prayer (15 mins.)
- topic presentation (30 mins.)
- private discussion time for engaged couples (45 mins.)
- group discussion/questions, closing (30 mins.)

TWO WEEKENDS

- 9 am to 4 pm twice (12 hours total, includes a one hour lunch break)
- if sessions are held only on one weekend (Friday evening and Saturday), a minimum of two more sessions (two hours each) will be required

COUPLE TO COUPLE MENTORSHIP

- couples trained in a diocesan approved program to offer couple to couple mentorship
- 6-8 sessions

**Ideally, Marriage Formation should be carried out in the parish where the couple is getting married, so ongoing support can be offered to the newly married couple. Training and support will be offered to parishes in the diocese who don't currently offer Marriage Formation.*

PATHWAYS FOR PASTORS

NURTURING LOVE THROUGH ACCOMPANIMENT

"One thing becomes abundantly clear in the context of the 'missionary conversion' called for by Pope Francis: Christian families are themselves the principal agents of the family apostolate; especially through their 'joy-filled witness'.

Parishes are at the heart of this endeavor. Pastors bear a great responsibility in evangelizing and catechizing couples, presenting them with a high ideal of a love that is strong, solid, enduring and capable of sustaining them through whatever trials they may have to face."

From "The Joy of Love", A Brief Journey Through Amoris Laetitia, Catholic Organization for Life and Family 2017

1

PRELIMINARY INFORMATION FORM

- the initial interview with an engaged couple presents an occasion to begin a relationship, to get to know the engaged couple
- an occasion to listen and seek to understand where the couple is in their pilgrimage to the Lord and to listen to insights from the Holy Spirit
- it can be a first step to intentional accompaniment, to help lead them to an encounter with Jesus Christ



2

ADDITIONAL FORMS

- the second meeting is the time to start the marriage file and discuss requirements such as Baptism certificates, etc.
- it can also be a time of building on the relationship that was started in the first meeting; a time to use for teaching
- depending on where the engaged couple is at, there may be an opening to proclaim the Kerygma

"So deeply do we care for you that we are determined to share with you not only the gospel of God but also our own selves, because you have become very dear to us" (1 Thessalonians 2:8)

PATHWAYS FOR PASTORS

FOUR OPPORTUNITIES FOR EVANGELIZATION

MARRIAGE FORMATION SESSIONS

3

- engaged couples are introduced to the value and richness of marriage through the witness of married couples and with the help of practical tools
- In her motherly concern the church accompanies her children throughout their entire lifespan. She recognizes however that some moments are decisive passages in which people more readily allow themselves to be touched by God's grace and become more open to making a journey of faith. Along these paths it is appropriate to make use of the generous and valuable help of other couples with long-standing experience in marriage. The community is to be more attentive to the moments of accompaniment indicated here. (232 Directory for Catechesis)



LAST MEETING BEFORE THE WEDDING DAY

4

- a good time for the Pastor to answer questions that may have surfaced at Marriage Formation sessions
- the engaged couple should already have met with the Wedding Liturgy Coordinator to discuss readings, etc.
- Pastors may want to confirm that the liturgy is prepared and give details for the rehearsal
- by the time the wedding day rolls around, the couple preparing for marriage will have experienced several significant encounters with the Pastor and the Parish

228. Conjugal and family life, lived according to God's plan, constitutes in itself a Gospel in which God's gratuitous and patient love for humanity can be read. By the virtue of the sacrament of marriage, Christian spouses participate in the unity and of fruitful love that exists between Christ and the Church. *Catechesis in the family* therefore has the task of revealing to those who take part in family life, above all to the spouses and parents, the gift that God gives to them through the sacrament of marriage.

Directory of Catechesis
Pontifical Council for the Promotion of the New Evangelization



OFFICE OF EVANGELIZATION & CATECHESIS

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